



OTTAWA, December 15, 2020 – The Canadian Society of Allergy & Clinical Immunology (CSACI) is aware of media reports of two healthcare workers at the National Health Services in the United Kingdom (UK) who experienced adverse reactions on December 8, 2020 after receiving the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for COVID-19. This is the same vaccine that was approved for use in Canada on December 9, 2020. Subsequent to the UK reports, Public Health England in the UK made initial broad cautionary recommendations.

The CSACI is the largest national professional medical specialty organization representing Canadian physicians with special expertise in allergy and immunology and who are the preeminent experts in the diagnosis and management of allergic conditions, including vaccine allergy. The CSACI recognizes that the reports from the UK, along with the subsequent general recommendations, will undoubtedly and unfortunately lead to vaccine hesitancy. The CSACI would like to emphasize that the majority of individuals with a history of allergy will be able to safely receive vaccination for COVID-19.

The safety data in the clinical trials for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for COVID-19 did not find a significant number of anaphylaxis events. As with any vaccine, the potential for adverse reactions, including allergic reactions, exists.

The NACI (National Advisory Committee on Immunization) has specifically identified polyethylene glycol (PEG) as a potential allergen in the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine; however, the CSACI would like to point out that as of this date, PEG has not been confirmed as the cause of reaction for the reported adverse reactions in the UK. **PEG is found in multiple products that are tolerated safely on a daily basis by many individuals in Canada**, including bowel preparation products for surgical procedures, certain laxatives and other medications, certain skin care products and cosmetics, and some food and drinks. In addition, although allergy to PEG has been reported, it is reassuring to note that **no cases of anaphylaxis to PEG in foods and drinks have been reported**.

As such, the CSACI would like to commend [Health Canada's prudent advice regarding the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for COVID-19](#), stating that **ONLY those with known "...allergies to any of the ingredients in the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID 19 vaccine should not receive it..."**. Health Canada further recommends that individuals "who have experienced a serious allergic reaction to another vaccine, drug or food, ...should talk to [their] health professional before [they] receive the vaccine".

The CSACI would like to reassure our fellow Canadians that unless one has a pre-existing allergy to a component of a vaccine, including the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, it is safe to proceed with vaccination for COVID-19. **In addition, those with other allergic problems are no more likely to experience an allergic reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine than the general population and should safely be able to receive this vaccine—this includes those with a history of serious allergic reactions or anaphylaxis to substances that are not an ingredient in this vaccine, and those with food allergy, eczema, allergic rhinitis (hayfever), asthma, or stinging insect allergy.**

We continue to monitor these reports closely and will continue to update our website, www.csaci.ca, as new information arrives.

About the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (CSACI)

The CSACI is the largest national professional medical specialty organization in Canada representing physicians, allied health professionals and scientists with special expertise in the management of allergic and immunologic diseases. The Society is also dedicated to improving the quality of life of people with allergies through research, advocacy, continuing professional development and public education.

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